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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0241
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
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RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 3358
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 1174
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SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: DETAILS EMERGE ABOUT NEW
COUNTERNARCOTICS AGENCY

REF: ASHGABAT 0122

Classified By: CDA RICHARD E. HOAGLAND: 1.4 (B), (D)

11. (C) SUMMARY: A symbol of Turkmenistan's new commitment to combating narcotics trafficking, the State Agency for Combating Narcotics that President Berdimuhamedov established January 18, will have nearly 700 employees and will function much as the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) does, according to UNODC and an official from Turkmenistan's Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). It will focus on counternarcotics operations, and will have authority over investigations of drug-related crimes. Headed by a well-respected official with a "can-do" attitude, the organization seems to have everything -- except training and, possibly, fiscal resources -- working in its favor. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) During recent separate meetings, UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Project Coordinator Ercan Saka and the Acting Chief of the Ministry of Internal Affairs' (MVD's) Forensic Laboratory Murad Cherkezov (please strictly protect both throughout) told the Embassy details of the composition and purpose of the State Agency for Combating Narcotics (SACN), announced on January 18 at a meeting of Turkmenistan's National Security Council (reftel). According to Cherkezov, this new agency will function much like the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). It will focus on the operations side of counternarcotics activity and will have authority over the investigation of drug-related crimes, as well as spearheading the Government of Turkmenistan's drug awareness/prevention efforts. It will operate under the Cabinet of Ministers and its head, Murad Islamov, will report directly to the president. (NOTE: Until his appointment to lead the State Agency for Combating Narcotics, Islamov headed the State Drug Coordination Committee. END NOTE.)

A PLETHORA OF PERSONNEL, BUT OTHER RESOURCES NEEDED

¶3. (SBU) About 700 officers will work for the new agency in offices in each province and municipality. The Agency will also have its own forensic laboratory. SACN's headquarters is located next to the MVD in Ashgabat. According to Saka, although President Berdimuhamedov told UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa that the government of Turkmenistan would self-fund this agency, Islamov pointedly asked Saka what UNODC's contribution would be. Islamov informed UNODC that his new agency needs technical and training assistance, office equipment, computer equipment/information technology, and vehicles.

MVD LOSES COUNTERNARCOTICS FUNCTION

¶4. (SBU) The State Drug Coordination Committee will be kept intact with responsibility for coordination of law-enforcement agencies' policies. The government dismantled the MVD's Department on Fighting Illegal Drug Trafficking and transferred its functions to the newly-established agency.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: We had wondered what the new Agency would do and how much authority it would have. With 700 employees, it certainly appears that it will have the manpower, if not yet the other resources, to do the job. It bodes well that Murad Islamov is in charge, since he is well-known as a "can-do" Turkmen official. END COMMENT.
HOAGLAND